

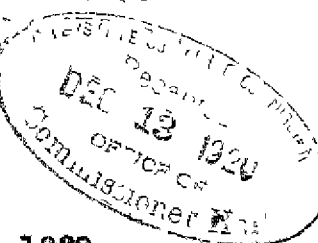
For Information

Hall

Dec 13/20

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IN RE INVESTIGATION OF AN ACCIDENT WHICH
OCCURRED ON THE MISSOURI, KANSAS & TEXAS
RAILWAY OF TEXAS, NEAR DENISON, TEXAS, ON
OCTOBER 8, 1920.



November 30, 1920.

On October 8, 1920, there was a head-end collision between two freight trains on the Missouri, Kansas & Texas Railway of Texas, near Denison, Texas, which resulted in the injury of 6 employees. After investigation of this accident, the Chief of the Bureau of Safety reports as follows:

That part of the Dallas Division on which this accident occurred is a single-track line extending between Denison and Hillsboro, Texas, a distance of 172.3 miles, over which trains are operated by time-table and train orders transmitted by telephone, no block-signal system being in use. Approaching the point of accident from the north there is a tangent 4,315 feet in length, followed by a 2-degree curve to the left 930 feet in length; the accident occurred on this curve 124 feet north of its southern end, on^a fill about 12 feet in height. Approaching the point of accident from the south there is a 1-degree 30-minute curve to the left 1,877 feet in length and a tangent 904 feet in length, followed by the curve on which the accident occurred. The grade is undulating, and at the point of accident is .56 per cent descending for north-bound trains. The view was materially obscured by trees on the inside of the curve south of the point of accident. The weather at the time of the accident was clear.

Northbound freight train extra 701 consisted of 69 cars and

a caboose, hauled by engine 701, and was in charge of Conductor Riley and Engineman Sayre. This train left Hunt, a turn-around point, at 12.38 p.m., with two train orders, neither of which is involved in the accident, and met southbound train No. 5 at Terrace, 7.8 miles from Denison. Train No. 5 passed Terrace at about 5.26 p.m., and extra 701 then headed out upon the main line and proceeded northward, colliding with extra 828 at about 5.33 p.m. while traveling at a speed variously estimated at between 3 and 7 miles an hour.

Southbound freight train extra 828 consisted of 42 cars and a caboose, hauled by engine 823, and was in charge of Conductor Brown and Engineman Owen. This extra originated at Ray, a freight-train yard located about 2 miles south of Denison. At Ray the crew of extra 828 received copies of train orders Nos. 71, 77, and 78, form 31, and No. 230, form 19, the last mentioned being a slow order. Train orders Nos. 71, 77, and 78, as issued to the crew of extra 828, read as follows:

No. 71 "No. 5 runs forty 40 mins late Denison to Trenton thirty 30 mins late Trenton to Greenville twenty 20 mins late Greenville to Dallas No. 2 eng. 353 runs twenty 20 mins late Dallas to Caddo Mills and ten 10 mins late Caddo Mills to Trenton.

No. 77 "Eng 319 meet extra 822 south at Hunt then run Extra to Ray has right over No. 93 Eng 526 to Celeste and meet Extra 828 south at Whitewright this to No. 93 at Celeste.

No. 78 "All trains Lamer at 4.25 p.m. have passed except No. 5 Eng 399."

These three orders were made complete at 4.25 p.m., a clearance card was issued, and the train departed without a

running order. A stop was made on the Dallas Division cut-off at Lamar, in order to allow train No. 5 to pass, after which extra 828 headed out upon the main line and departed southward. It passed Bona, the last open telegraph office, 5.1 miles south of Denison and 1.4 miles from the point of accident, at 5.31 p.m., 10 minutes behind train No. 5, and collided with extra 701 while running at a speed estimated to have been between 20 and 30 miles an hour.

Engine 701 was pushed backward about 160 feet and considerably damaged. The tender was demolished, the first five cars were turned over practically clear of the track, and the seventh car was broken in two. Engine 828 was partly derailed and somewhat damaged. The first 10 cars of extra 828 were derailed and were destroyed by fire which broke out in the wreckage.

After pulling out of the siding at Terrace, the engineman, fireman and head brakeman of extra 701 were watching for the proceed signal to be given from the rear of the train as soon as the rear brakeman had closed the passing-track switch, and their statements, as well as those of the other members of the crew, indicated that the accident occurred shortly after this proceed signal had been given. On account of the fact that they had been looking toward the rear of their train for this signal, and also on account of the curve, the members of the engine crew did not see extra 828 until it was only a short distance from them.

None of the members of the crew of extra 701 had any orders relating to extra 828.

The point of the accident was 576 feet north of what is known as Cheetaw Bridge, and the statements of Fireman Finn and Head Brakeman Garland of extra 828 indicated that as their train was rounding the curve approaching this bridge they saw extra 701 just north of the bridge, the distance between the two trains at this time being about 3 telegraph poles. Fireman Finn said he immediately called to Engineman Owen, and to Conductor Brown, who was also riding on the engine, and said that the engineman immediately applied the air brakes in emergency, after which all four men jumped from the engine. The statements of the engineman and conductor indicated that they did not know anything of the approach of extra 701 until the fireman called a warning.

According to Conductor Brown, of extra 828, he asked Operator Ellsworth, on duty at Ray, to fix up his orders, then went to the yardmaster's office for his bills, and returned to the operator's office and registered. The statements of both conductor and operator indicate that Operator Ellsworth asked the conductor to sign the orders and to tear them off himself, which the conductor did, after which he checked the orders against the clearance card and left the office without comparing the orders with the operator, who was busy with other duties. Conductor Brown said he then delivered copies of the orders to the engineman, and the engineman said he checked them against the clearance card

and also compared them with the conductor, after which he gave them to the fireman to read. Fireman Finn said he read the orders before the train departed from Ray, and also checked them against the clearance card, while the head brakeman said that the orders were not read to him and that he did not know whether his train had a running order, as he had not ridden on the engine long enough to see the orders. The engineman, conductor and fireman all admit that they failed to notice they did not have a running order. On account of the fact that the conductor went directly to the engine with his orders and rode on the engine leaving Ray, Rear Brakeman Clark had not seen the orders and knew nothing about them. The head brakeman and fireman estimated the speed of their train to have been between 20 and 25 miles an hour, while Conductor Brown estimated it to have been about 30 miles an hour.

Train orders Nos 71 and 77, previously quoted, had been issued by Dispatcher O'Connell, who went off duty at 4.00 p.m. When Operator Ellworth reported Conductor Brown as ready for his orders, Dispatcher Grover, who had relieved Dispatcher O'Connell, failed to note that no running order had been issued and after transmitting train order No. 78, clearing extra 828 on the register at Lamar, permitted extra 828 to depart from Ray without a running order; he said his mind was concentrated on preventing a congestion of trains at Royce City which would necessitate "sawing by" several trains, and also that he had failed to read

carefully all of the orders transferred to him by Dispatcher O'Connell and was under the impression that Dispatcher O'Connell, having issued train order No. 77, addressed to extra 828, had also issued the necessary running order. Attention is called to the fact, however, that even had Dispatcher Grover been correct in his assumption that extra 828 was provided with a running order, the accident would not have been prevented, inasmuch as he had not issued any order providing for a meeting point between extra 828 and extra 701.

This accident was caused by the failure of Dispatcher Grover to provide for a meeting point between extras 828 and 701.

Rule 211-A, of the Rules and Instructions for the Government of Employees, reads in part as follows:

"Clearance card must be filled out by operator before signatures to train orders are transmitted to dispatcher and immediately following signature to last order will transmit to dispatcher all other numbers shown on clearance which dispatcher must record in order book and note whether all orders for trains concerned are indicated before 'complete' is given."

Under this rule, at the time Operator Ellsworth transmitted Conductor Brown's signature to train orders Nos. 71, 77, and 230, at which time the dispatcher also issued train order No. 78, the dispatcher should have noted whether extra 828 was provided with all of the orders necessary for its movement. Dispatcher Grover acknowledged his error in clearing the train at Ray without having provided for meeting points with opposing extra trains and also in failing to issue the necessary running order.

Conductor Brown and Engineman Owen are open to severe

censure for their failure to note that no running order had been issued. Each of them, according to his own statement, had read the orders received and checked them against the clearance, and they offered no excuse for their action in departing from the terminal without a running order. Had any of these employees noticed this fact, and had Conductor Brown called the dispatcher's attention to the matter, it is possible that at that time the dispatcher's error might have been discovered.

Dispatcher Grover was employed as a dispatcher in September, 1920, previous to which he had had about 16 years' experience as a train dispatcher on other railroads. Conductor Brown was employed as a brakeman in 1904 and promoted to conductor in 1909. Engineman Ovan was employed as an engineman in 1907. The records of these employees were good.

At the time of the accident the crew of extra 828 had been on duty less than 2 hours, previous to which the engine crew had been off duty 21 hours and the train crew over 13 hours.

The investigation disclosed that while train order No. 77 as previously quoted had been issued by Dispatcher O'Connell to Operator Ellsworth at Ray as train order No. 77, it was shown in the train-order book, according to Dispatcher Grover, as a continuation of train order No. 76, while Dispatcher Grover said train order No. 77 was an annulment order and had been checked off on the train-order book as having been fulfilled, not being shown in the transfer. After the accident the number "77" was found in the train order book opposite that part of train order No. 76 which is quoted in this report as train order No. 77, and

Dispatcher Grover claimed that this number had been inserted after the order had been transferred to him. Dispatcher O'Connell denied having inserted this number, thus making two orders out of one, and claimed that train order No. 77 as previously quoted was shown on the transfer. He admitted, however, that he had issued two separate orders under the number "77", one being the order previously ^{quoted} and the other being the annulment order, and he said that a few hours after the accident he changed the number of the annulment order from "77" to "78", the result of this action on the part of Dispatcher O'Connell is that the number "78" now appears on two train orders, the other being the order issued by Dispatcher Grover clearing extra 828 on the register at Lamar.